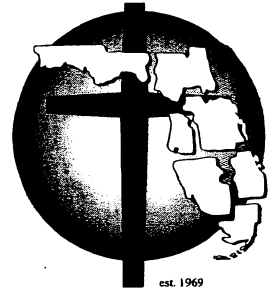


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UNIVERSAL PRE-K (FRAMING CRITERIA SO PRIVATE-SECTOR PROGRAMS CAN BE PART OF THE SOLUTION)

For Florida to begin preparing for 151,998 children (based on estimated 70 percent participation) to access Universal Pre-K by 2005, it is essential for the state to include private sector programs as part of the solution to help meet the student demand. Approximately 80 percent of the Pre-K programs within Florida are private. Many are amenable to participating in Universal Pre-K, provided that they maintain their independence and autonomy.

The implementation of Universal Pre-K should be an example of private sector and public sector representatives coming together as partners to provide quality programming for Florida's 4-year-old children. It is in that spirit that an advisory board be established for all stakeholders to discuss the framework of the program.

There is consensus that accountability in the form of outcome-based performance should be a staple of the program. However, this is not to say that all participating programs should be "rubber stamped" under the mantra that one methodology is best for all children. The vast majority of private sector programs, including faith-based, are reputed for providing quality programming with their own curricula, credentialing and held to standards under the oversight of an existing accrediting association.

Following are recommendations that would facilitate Universal Pre-K participation of Catholic early childhood programs:

- Religious mission would not be compromised;
- The organizations/associations that accredit them would not be subject to change;
- The Accrediting Association would determine credentialing and curriculum;
- Openness to screening instruments to determine the developmental level of 4-year-old children enrolling in Universal Pre-K and follow-up screenings at the end of the year to assess student gains/performance;
- Program profiles (curricula, credentialing, mission, history, accreditation etc) be incorporated on a website for parental information.

***LESSENING THE CLASS-SIZE BURDEN ON THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM
BY EXPANDING THE CORPORATE TAX SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM
TO INCLUDE SOME MEANS-TESTED NONPUBLIC SCHOOL FAMILIES***

WHAT: Providing a corporate tax scholarship to means tested families whose children graduated from a private school eighth grade.

WHY: Most of these students who meet the poverty threshold for Title I services and the National School Lunch Program transfer to public high schools because their parents do not have the financial wherewithal to afford \$5,000 to \$8,000 in private school tuition per child. By providing the amount of the tax scholarship (currently is \$3,500) to a private middle school student who would enroll in a public school, the state would realize the savings by not having to educate that child (cost of public high school education less the amount of the scholarship).

Note #1: Using real numbers, it is estimated that the state would save per child \$4,500 (Cost of public high school education -- \$8,000, less \$3,500 scholarship).

Note #2: More than 90 percent of means-tested Catholic students graduating from 8th grade attend a public high school.

CLASS SIZE: PRIVATE SCHOOLS CAN BE PART OF THE SOLUTION

I. Introduction

For much of the 20th century, public school education and private school education represented a bifurcated system. That is, public and private schools were separate and apart from one another with little opportunity for joint participation in state-education programs.

In the late 20th century and early 21st century, an educational paradigm has been established in Florida for public and private schools to begin coming together in unprecedented fashion as partners in the important work of providing a quality education for all children within the state. Florida's new K-20 seamless system of education has fostered a collaborative approach in which all educational stakeholders are to work together to improve articulation from public to private schools and vice versa and for children-centered/family friendly policies to be advanced. Following are examples of public-private programs and/or initiatives:

- Dual Enrollment for public and private high school students, as well as home school students, to access community college course work;
- Public, private and home school students accessing the Florida Online High School;
- State discounts on technology services for students in public and private schools;
- Initiatives to improve articulation agreements for students to access various schools and programs throughout the K-20 system.
- The establishment of hybrid schools/charter schools to meet the needs of some parents and families;
- Participation of private schools in school-choice programs to reach out to at-risk students who had been enrolled in public schools.

In light of the adoption of the constitutional amendments for class-size mandates and voluntary universal pre-K for 4-year-old children, private schools are expected to perform an essential role to alleviate the burgeoning responsibilities on the public school. By expanding the eligibility language in the Corporate Tax Scholarship Program to include some means-tested nonpublic school children and allowing nonpublic school teachers to have their loans forgiven too, private sector schools unequivocally can be part of the solution. And it is in the spirit of partnership that private-sector pre-K programs can help meet the demand of Universal Pre-K education.

***HOW PRIVATE SCHOOLS CAN LESSEN THE BURDEN
ON THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM THROUGH EXPANSION
OF THE CRITICAL TEACHER SHORAGE STUDENT LOAN
FORGIVENESS PROGRAM***

WHAT: Expanding this program by augmenting the \$1.7 million allocation so nonpublic school teachers can have their loans forgiven too.

WHY: There is a teacher shortage in private schools too. In many private schools there are waiting lines for students to enroll. These students continue their education in public schools because of the teacher shortage.

If the loan forgiveness program were to be expanded so nonpublic school teachers had their loans forgiven too, the state would realize considerable savings. For every additional nonpublic school teacher, 15-30 more students would be educated in a private school.

Consider the math: The loan forgiveness program provides loans up to \$2,500 a year. It costs the state \$7,000 to \$9,000 for every child who remained in a public funded school, less brick and mortar depreciation etc. For every teacher receiving a loan (\$2,500 X 4) and assuming a teacher educates only 15 students in a private school classroom, then the savings is 15 students X \$7,000 per student = \$105,000, less \$10,000 in loan forgiveness = \$95,000